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ABSTRACT

In general, the preparation and professional development of the early childhood work force is affected by three conditions: demand for quality, the operative fiscal and regulatory environment, and compensation. If all the conditions were right, the system would work. In reality, these conditions, and therefore the preparation and professional development that depend on them, vary considerably depending on the settings, the age ranges of children served, and the programs associated with the funding streams that support early childhood programs. Head Start is an example of a system in which demand, regulation, and compensation are addressed, though not with equal emphasis. The planned expansion of Head Start to all eligible children will put stress on this system. In addition, program expansion fueled by the Family Support Act (FSA) has the potential to affect preparation and staff develoment throughout the child care community, both in and outside of the traditional regulatory arena. This is due to FSA's expansion of the forms of "legitimate" child care to include forms not currently regulated. While the obvious direct ways to improve the quality of child care are not considered allowable expenses under the FSA, the act nevertheless offers unique opportunities to affect the conditions that constrain the preparation and development of the work force. (RH)

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Program Expansion as a Vehicle for Improving the Preparation and Professional Development of the Early Childhood Workforce[1]

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Let's assume that our primary policy goal is to ensure an adequately prepared and compensated early childhood workforce sufficient in number to meet the needs for program expansion across settings and age ranges.

The immediately relevant anticipated program expansions we need to consider, in relation to families living in poverty, are the upcoming expansion of Head Start to serve all eligible children by 1994 and the ongoing implementation of the Family Support Act (FSA), especially its child care provisions. Additionally, the continuing need for more and better child care for families at all income levels is a factor to consider.

Program expansion will occur in a variety of settings. Since the focus of this consultation is children from birth through kindergarten, the settings we have to consider are home-based and center-based programs for infants, toddlers and preschoolers and the public schools for kindergarteners. Family child care is the primary form of home-based program (leaving aside for purposes of this discussion in-home caregivers such as nannies), along with so-called "informal" care provided by neighbors and relatives that is legitimated by the child care provision of FSA. Center-based programs include what have been traditionally called nursery schools, child care centers and Head Start programs and with the recent expansion of public-funded prekindergarten programs, increasingly the public schools. Head Start is often assumed to be in the category of center-based programs, but it is actually a highly evolved program *concept* that operates (or can be operated) in many settings

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1. This paper was prepared for *Preparation and Professional Development Programs for Early Childhood Educators: Emerging Needs for the Next Decade*, a consultation co-sponsored by the Carnegie Corporation and the Rockefeller Brothers Fund and held in New York City on November 7-8, 1990.

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including the client's home, family child care homes, child care centers and the public schools.

Conditions affecting the workforce

Generally speaking, the preparation and professional development of the early childhood workforce is affected by three conditions: demand for quality (expressed by both consumers and producers), the operative fiscal and regulatory environment, and compensation.[2] If all the conditions were right, the system would work. That is, if parents and potential employers demanded well-qualified teachers, and the applicable regulatory system codified and required basic elements of "well-qualified", *and* the compensation offered to potential members of the workforce were commensurate with the preparation demanded and required, we would not be here discussing these problems because pre-service education and continuing professional development programs would be in place to prepare and support such a workforce.

But in reality, these conditions and therefore the preparation and professional development that depends on them, vary considerably among the settings and across the age ranges of children served and between programs associated with the various funding streams that financially support early childhood programs. That adults who work with young children are prepared for their jobs at all is clearly not the result of a well-organized training system. Preparation for the job is mostly a matter of chance--being near a community college which offers early childhood education courses, or a child care resource and referral agency that offers workshops for new providers, or having attended a high school which offered a child development course.

Demand

Changing the nature of consumer (parent) demand for quality is not easy. Very little research has been done on consumer behavior in regard to child care. Generally, parents make choices affected by their knowledge of what's available, their ability to pay (and/or to access subsidies), and some combination of two sets of factors, one representing what they see as good for their child and the other being what they see as good for themselves. One study found that mothers' satisfaction with child care overall seemed to be related to their child's experience (including interactions with the teacher), the physical facility, and staff turnover, while their own well-being as a worker was influenced by a different set of factors (e.g., hours, cost, location, policies and opportunities for input).[3] For consumers to begin

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2. I am indebted to Dr. Joan Lombardi for her original conceptualization of these conditions. See her paper *Towards a Qualified Workforce: A Topology of the Issues* (October 1990).
3. Shinn, M, Galinsky, E. and Gulcur, L. (1990). *The Role of Child Care Centers in the Lives of Parents.* New York: NYU Dept. of Psychology.

demanding a more qualified workforce, they will have to see the relationship between well-prepared/compensated teachers and their child as valuable enough to be worth paying for *and* have sufficient resources to afford to pay.

Providers of early childhood programs are clearer in their desire for well-prepared staff. For example, directors of child care centers cite finding good staff as their number one priority (problem) which indicates both that they *want* qualified staff and that such staff are hard to find. A recent survey of public school-operated prekindergarten programs also indicated that qualified staff are desired even when the "system" (public school district) doesn't recognize some of the qualifications. The typical requirements for public school prekindergarten teachers were teacher certification (usually in early childhood education) but no previous experience working with young children. However, more than half of the teachers who were hired had both early childhood certification and at least one year of experience.[4]

Regulation

As Gwen Morgan aptly puts it, "Regulation is a blunt instrument for achieving quality." Certainly this is true with respect to the structural aspects of quality in early childhood (e.g., ratios, group sizes) and for staff qualifications and in-service training requirements at present. More than half the states don't require any preservice training or education for child care workers and only about a quarter require more than ten hours of in-service training annually.[5] However, in those states that have upgraded their inservice training requirements, the workforce and the common sources of training have responded. (For example, when Nebraska added a 12-hour/year inservice training requirement, attendance at early childhood organization professional conferences went up and more students enrolled in community college courses.)

The relationship between regulation and teacher preparation programs is clearly evident in general education. Regulation of the K-12 teaching profession by state education agencies (via teaching certification procedures and the accreditation of higher education institutions) is widely regarded as one of the primary forces driving the higher education system of teacher preparation and in-service professional development.[6] (Also, teachers' compensation generally improves with the acquisition of additional coursework and advanced degrees.) If this force can be employed in the realm of early childhood, the regulating systems we have to address are those of Head Start as acted upon by federal regional offices of ACYF, state and

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4. Mitchell, A. W. (1988). *The District Survey.* New York: Bank Street College.
5. Morgan, G. (1987). *The National State of Child Care Regulation 1986.* Watertown, MA: Work/Family Directions.
6. Consumer demand on the part of employers (i.e., schools and districts) can also be a factor influencing schools of education, but is much weaker and more diffuse than the state agency's influence.

local child care regulatory codes and the agencies enforcing them and state education agencies (in relation to kindergarten, and in some cases prekindergarten, teachers).

Linking regulatory systems. Making connections between (among) the various regulatory systems in the area of staff qualifications is one means of unifying the early childhood workforce and may be a way to extend the preparation and inservice opportunities available to one sector of the workforce to others. An instructive example of attempts at making such connections is the experience of states whose (state-funded) prekindergarten programs use settings other than public schools. States have available at least four regulatory systems which can be used alone or in combination (i.e., the school code, Head Start standards, the day care regulatory code, or day care purchase-of-service standards) to create new standards specific to their prekindergarten program. Those that created prekindergarten programs specifically modeled on Head Start and which expected to use local Head Start agencies to operate them, relied heavily on the Head Start Performance Standards (e.g., New Jersey and Oregon). Others used day care licensing standards alone or in combination (e.g., California, Massachusetts, Michigan, Ohio, and Vermont). Florida and Illinois attempted to incorporate elements of child care standards in their prekindergarten standards thus creating career ladders of a sort.

In Florida, staff education and ongoing training requirements overlap among the various state-funded programs. The Department of Public Instruction (DPI) requires all staff in the state-funded prekindergarten program to complete the 20-hour introductory child care training course or its equivalent that is required for child care workers by the state day care licensing agency (Dept. of Health and Rehabilitative Services [DHRS]). The project director in a state-funded prekindergarten program must have a college degree in early childhood or its equivalent, which is the degree DPI specifies as one of the requirements for teacher certification in early childhood education, while prekindergarten teachers (referred to as supervisory personnel) must have a CDA or the equivalent, which is also one of three options for being qualified as a teacher under day care licensing. Recognizing teaching qualifications as part of administrative qualifications is commendable because it offers a professional career ladder of sorts within each system. These two ladders, one under DPI and the other under DHRS, intersect on the one element of teacher qualifications common to both prekindergarten and child care (the introductory 20-hour course).

Illinois offers a different perspective on reconciling regulatory differences--by directly including staff qualification requirements from the day care code in the standards for the prekindergarten program. Illinois, like many states, exempts programs operated by public schools and private elementary schools from licensure by its Department of Children and Family Services. However, the Illinois Board of

Education standards for its state-funded prekindergarten program permit teachers to meet qualification requirements *either* by holding an early childhood teaching certificate issued under the school code *or* by meeting the standards set under day care licensing for a day care center supervisor. These two sets of requirements differ significantly. Early childhood certification requires a bachelor's degree with at least 22 hours in professional education and early childhood education courses, plus a preschool practicum. The minimum requirement for a day care director under state day care licensing is a CDA credential, 12 semester hours of course work in child care or child development, and 2 years of teaching experience in a nursery school, kindergarten, or licensed day care center.

Even though the skills and abilities possessed by (day care) directors and (public school) teachers are presumably not equivalent (i.e., administration and teaching require different skills), and the minimum requirements are different for certified early childhood teachers and day care directors, this connection between the day care and public school prekindergarten regulatory systems in Illinois unlocks the door to an integrated professional career ladder.

Obviously, there are real issues to be resolved. Not only are two state agencies involved (BOE and DCFS), but two different levels of regulatory compliance: individuals versus program sites. Individuals are certified by the Illinois BOE as credentialed teachers. Day care directors (supervisors) are not individually credentialed, although their qualifications are evaluated by the DCFS in the process of licensing the day care program they direct. Whether these connections have an effect on the offering of preparation and training opportunities remains to be seen.

Compensation

No discussion of the preparation and professional development of the early childhood workforce can proceed without simultaneously considering compensation. A nation that expects to be able to induce adults to become well-educated, experienced teachers who will then have to work for just-above-minimum wages without health insurance is seriously short-sighted, possibly insane and surely does not value work with young children.

The experience of communities which implemented public school-operated prekindergarten programs on a large scale shows clearly that teachers (who are qualified) will take advantage of an opportunity to improve their compensation situation when the option is available--in some cases doubling their salaries. Based on discussions with some of these teachers, it is also clear that trade-offs are made between the elements of compensation (i.e., among wages, benefits and working conditions). Teachers who moved from the child care or Head Start community into large urban public schools often felt that they had traded much better salaries and benefits for worse working conditions.

Head Start

Head Start is an example of a system in which demand, regulation and compensation are all addressed (although not with equal emphasis). The planned expansion of Head Start to all eligible children will put stress on this system.

Demand for Head Start is not so much generated by individual consumers, but on their behalf by public officials, business leaders, and the greater Head Start community which has carried the clear and simple message: Head Start works, so let's not serve only a portion of those children who are eligible, but every child. Demand for Head Start implies a demand for quality Head Start (i.e., give us more of the same quality program that we believe works). The relationship between regulation and qualifications is clearly drawn: each classroom is required to have at least one staff member with a Child Development Associate (CDA) credential, funds are available for the CDA credentialing system (and some scholarships for individuals pursuing the credential), and various organizations offer CDA training. Recognition of CDA outside of Head Start has been slow to take hold although at present about three-quarters of the states include it in their child care regulatory system.

Beyond support for CDA, Head Start funds a network of regional Training and Technical Assistance Centers which offer training support to local programs and each local grantee receives direct funding allotted for training. However, Head Start appropriations for staff training as a proportion of the total Head Start budget have steadily declined over the past fifteen years, from a high of over 5% in 1974 to a level of just over 2% in 1989. Expansion demands that more funds be allotted for training and development of Head Start staff. A modest increase in training funds is part of the Head Start Reauthorization Act.

Compensation for Head Start staff has been a difficult issue. While there is disagreement between Head Start officials and the greater Head Start community over how certain aspects of the overall early childhood staffing crisis affect Head Start (i.e., turnover), a number of facts are clear and must be addressed if Head Start is to prosper. Close to half of teachers earn less than $10,000 per year (average salary is $11,859).[7] Many Head Start staff have no health insurance benefits; retirement benefits beyond mandatory social security are rare. That staff who have been with the program since its inception (and are therefore near to retirement) have no pension/retirement benefits is disgraceful. Staff who have improved their qualifications (e.g., acquired the CDA or educational degrees) do not routinely receive additional compensation. Although turnover is lower in Head Start than in child care centers in general (19% vs. 41%), it appears to have

7. The Head Start Silver Ribbon Panel (1990). *Head Start: The Nation's Pride, A Nation's Challenge.* Alexandria, VA: National Head Start Association.

escalated recently. In a just-released Head Start salary study, low wages were cited as the primary reason for staff leaving in 45% of the programs surveyed; leaving for a better job was the primary reason in 22%.[8] Head Start reauthorization directly addresses these issues by setting aside 5% of the funds for compensation.

The strains that expansion will place on Head Start are real and severe--even if expansion could be accomplished by using only current grantees who (presumably) "know how to do it". If Head Start is a concept that works for poor children (as it certainly is), then expansion takes on a whole new meaning. Expansion must include deliberate efforts to integrate the essential elements of Head Start within other early childhood programs that reach poor families, such as child care for AFDC recipients in JOBS programs.

The Family Support Act

Program expansion fueled by the FSA has the potential to affect preparation and staff development throughout the child care community within and outside the traditional regulatory arena since FSA expands the forms of "legitimate" child care to ones currently not regulated such as in-home care and preliminary indications are that states seem to favor expansions of family child care.

To succeed as the major reform of our welfare system that was envisioned, the FSA has to address the entire family, not only the parent. Parents should be assisted to improve their skills and education and become (or return to being) productive, self-supporting citizens. Making choices in decisions affecting one's children is a large part of responsible parenthood. Preserving parental choice in child care under the FSA is essential to the goal of increasing parent's self-sufficiency. It was apparently the intention of the Act's framers and regulation writers to ensure that AFDC families have as much as possible the same range of choices that other families have in child care.

Because the children of AFDC recipients are precisely those children who can most benefit from a quality early childhood education/child development program, it is crucial to ensure that the quality of care they receive is high.[9] In tandem with promoting parental choice, the goal of the child care portion of FSA ought to be to make the entire range of programs for children the best that they can be, so that AFDC parents can make good choices for their children rather than being forced into making the cheapest ones. Clearly, the quality of child care matters for these children. Consumer education materials and methods used by the states to promote

8. Collins, R. C. (1990). *Head Start Salaries: 1989-90 Staff Salary Survey.* Alexandria, VA: National Head Start Association.
9. Lazar, I. & Darlington, R. B. (1978). *Lasting effects after preschool: a report of the Consortium for Longitudinal Studies.* (DHEW Pub. No. OHDS 79-30178). Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.

choice can also promote quality. For example, as Head Start enrollment expands, it should be clearly presented as a choice to AFDC parents of 3- and 4-year olds.

The obvious direct ways to improve the quality of child care such as offering providers training and technical assistance, promoting voluntary accreditation, etc. (and even those efforts aimed at supply-building to meet the increased demands for child care) are, unfortunately, not allowable expenses under FSA. The Act and its regulations offer only indirect messages about their intentions with regard to *quality* of child care. The options to expand payment mechanisms and to pay market rates for child care can be used as tools for gradually improving the quality of the workforce and the care provided to children, (although their inclusion in FSA is probably more an effort to support parental choice than to improve quality). The requirement for coordination with other early childhood education programs may be a means to program improvement, but it was more likely included as a cost-efficiency message than a call for quality early education for children on AFDC.

Nonetheless, the FSA offers unique opportunities to affect the conditions that currently constrain the preparation and development of the workforce. Consumer demand for quality can be affected by consumer education efforts designed to meet the FSA requirements that parents be informed of available child care and be provided a choice among options. Paying at regularly adjusted market rates can, over time, improve the compensation of the workforce. Regulatory and fiscal conditions are also affected by FSA. States are specifically directed to examine family child care regulation and to include unregulated forms of care as eligible for payment. FSA offers the opportunity to increase the federal share of child care costs to at least 50% and much more in poor states. (According to one state official, "It's like the federal government is running a half-price sale on child care".) States in an economic position to take advantage will expand their ability to subsidize low-income consumer demand for child care. Via FSA, states have the potential to affect the entire early childhood market.

If FSA child care expansion is to affect preparation and training of child care providers, child care has to valued as more than just substitute custody while mom is in training or at work. FSA child care expansion is a perfect place to begin to practice Head Start "expansion as integration".

Both Head Start and FSA child care expansion offer interesting opportunities to directly promote the preparation of low-income parents to enter the field of early education. Head Start has always functioned as an employer of parents and offered a reasonable career ladder moving from classroom volunteer through teacher and beyond. In 1990, about 35% of Head Start staff were current and former parents.[10]

10. Horn, W. (1990). Head Start: A program that works. *Child Care Information Exchange.* Redmond, WA: Exchange Press, Inc.

State JOBS programs could promote early childhood programs as a career option for participants--if the wages and benefits in the field were better. States that have established targets for hourly wages and benefits that are sufficient to encourage women to leave AFDC have effectively eliminated early childhood as a career choice. In some states (those with more generous AFDC benefit levels), remaining on AFDC would be a wiser choice than going into child care work.

Appropriate roles for public agencies

The expansion of Head Start and FSA each offer possibilities for affecting the preparation and continuing development of the early childhood workforce. Taken together, they are a powerful opportunity to affect the lives of children who are poor--if Head Start can be expanded in ways that also meet families' needs for substitute custody of children and the concept of Head Start can be infused into FSA-related child care and into other programs for young children. A promising vehicle for doing this is the new Head Start-State Partnership which will fund liaisons in ten governors' offices who will coordinate Head Start and other state preschool programs. Facilitating the well-coordinated expansion of Head Start with FSA-related child care should be their primary and immediate concern.

The interconnections between compensation, the regulatory/fiscal environment and consumer demand for quality must be recognized and addressed simultaneously in any efforts to improve early childhood preparation and professional development. Improving these conditions will improve the early childhood workforce. The role of federal and state officials should be to promote systemic approaches, rather than focusing on only one program, only one condition, or only on training directly. Making connections (e.g., among programs, funding streams, training offerings) will help to establish a common standard for early childhood program staffing. These kinds of connections need to be made both at the state level and at the federal level between and among agencies.

At this point, the problems and the forces driving them are much clearer than the precise solutions to the problems of professional preparation and continuing development of the early childhood workforce. Having a framework to understand a problem is the first step toward solving it.